

Message Text

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ACTION AF-08

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INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 AID-05 COME-00 EB-07 FRB-03 TRSE-00 XMB-02

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E.O. 11652: NA

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SUBJECT: CALL ON ASANTEHENE AND REGIONAL ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER.

1. POLITICAL OFFICER PAID COURTESY CALLS ON ASANTEHENE, OTUMFUO OPOKU WARE II, AND ASHANTI REGIONAL ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER, J.D. COBBINAH, IN KUMASI ON AUGUST 30. CONVERSATIONS WERE LONGER ON PLEASANTRIES THAN ON SUBSTANCE BUT FOLLOWING SIGNIFICANT POINTS WERE MADE:

2. ASANTEHENE SAID MAJOR ECONOMIC PROBLEM FACING ASHANTI AREA WAS MOVEMENT OF YOUNG PEOPLE OUT OF REGION IN SEARCH OF BETTER JOB OPPORTUNITIES IN ACCRA. HE AND GOG ARE SEEKING TO STEM FLOW BY ENCOURAGING ESTABLISHMENT OF NEW INDUSTRIES IN KUMASI. IN ADDITION, INFLATION WAS CONTINUING PROBLEM AFFECTING COUNTRY AS A WHOLE.

3. ASANTEHENE DISCUSSED PLANS FOR EXPANDING PALACE AND SAID HE PLANS TO ASK BOTH US AND UK FOR ASSISTANCE IN SETTING UP CULTURAL CENTER IN NEW PALACE COMPLEX WHICH WOULD BE USED BY FOREIGN

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AND GHANAIAN SCHOLARS RESEARCHING ASHANTI HISTORY AND CULTURE.

POLITICAL OFFICER SAID WHILE HE COULD NOT COMMIT US ONE WAY OR THE OTHER ON IDEA, EMBASSY WOULD WELCOME CHANCE TO STUDY PROPOSAL AND CONSULT WITH HMG. (IT APPEARS PROPOSAL IS NOT YET IN CONCRETE OR WRITTEN FORM.)

4. RE US/GHANAIAAN RELATIONS, ASANTEHENE ASKED HIS BEST REGARDS BE TRANSMITTED TO AMBASSADOR BLACK AND SPOKE WARMLY OF HIS CONTACTS WITH HER. HE EXPRESSED HOPE BILATERAL RELATIONS WOULD RETURN TO PREVIOUS STATE OF CLOSENESS IN NEAR FUTURE. RE SOUTHERN AFRICAN ISSUES, HE DEPLORED RHODESIA'S STRIKES INTO MOZAMBIQUE, SMITH INTRANSIGENCE AND LOSS OF LIFE IN SOUTH AFRICAN RIOTS. US INVOLVEMENT IN SOUTHERN AFRICAN ISSUES WAS WARMLY APPLAUDED.

5. COBBINAH NOTED ASHANTI REGION WAS WELL ENDOWED WITH COCOA, TIMBER AND AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES. THUS ECONOMIC PINCH WAS NOT AS SEVERE IN KUMASI AS IN OTHER PARTS OF COUNTRY BUT PROBLEMS NEVERTHELESS EXISTED (INFLATION, SHORTAGES OF GASOLINE, SPARE PARTS, AND FOOD.) HE CLAIMED SMUGGLING OF COCOA OUT OF GHANA NOT A SERIOUS PROBLEM IN HIS AREA BECAUSE OF DISTANCE FROM NEIGHBORING STATES. RECENT 25 PERCENT INCREASE IN PRICE PAID TO COCOA FARMERS, HE SAID, HAS HAD POSITIVE IMPACT ON LARGER SCALE FARMERS (THOSE EARNING CEDIS 10,000--\$8,700--PER YEAR), PRESUMABLY BY INCREASING THEIR INCOME AND WILLINGNESS TO SELL COCOA THROUGH OFFICIAL CHANNELS. HOWEVER, COBBINAH LEFT IMPRESSION THAT IMPACT ON SMALL SCALE PRODUCERS, WHO GROW MUCH OF GHANA'S COCOA, WAS LESS PRONOUNCED.

6. WHILE OUTLINING HIS OWN ROLE IN IMPLEMENTING DECISIONS TAKEN BY SMC, COBBINAH ASSERTED THAT POPULAR DISSATISFACTION, IF IT AROSE ON SPECIFIC ISSUE, WOULD BE PASSED UNDILUTED BACK UP CHAIN OF COMMAND TO ACCRA. ASKED WHETHER OFFICIALS MIGHT NOT WANT TO AVOID BEING BEARERS OF BAD NEWS, HE ADMITTED THIS ALWAYS A HUMAN PROBLEM BUT THAT IT DID NOT AFFECT ADMINISTRATION OF HIS REGION. (COBBINAH APPEARED SINCERE BUT WE DOUBT SYSTEM WORKS THIS WELL.)

7. BOTH ASANTEHENE AND COBBINAH URGED POLITICAL OFFICER TO CALL AGAIN ON NEXT VISIT TO KUMASI. IN ADDITION, COBBINAH EXTENDED INVITATION FOR HUNT IN NORTHEASTERN ASHANTI WHEN SEASON OPENS DECEMBER 1, AN OFFER WHICH WAS READILY ACCEPTED. LINEHAN
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